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# There are so many faiths



# RELIGION – TO DO WITHOUT IN ORDER TO USE FREUD, A SCIENTIST

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine Freud's relationship to science in light of what binds him to Judaism and his Judeity. Can we find a link between what was passed on to him from Judaism and his indestructible hope for science? This, by consequence, could allow us to distinguish faith in language and in the unconscious, from faith in religion. To this end, we will take a look at some writings, in particular Moses and monotheism (Freud, 2010) with special interest on what it means to be Jewish for Freud.

## KEYWORDS

Judaism | Moses | persistence | transmission | interpretation

«To try to put all religions in the same basket and do what is called 'the history of religions' is truly awful. There is one true religion and that is the Christian religion. (Lacan, 2005, p.81).

In *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960: The seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VII* (Lacan, 1986, p. 204-205), the author emphasizes the originality of Freud's position on the question of religions, precisely because it allows us to classify these religions, if we do not remain on the side of religiosity. There would be religions that fall into the category of the imaginary, those that oppose the tradition of monotheism, whose commandments are the laws of speech: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image". Referring to Moses, Lacan notes:

«Given that these commandments turn out to be proof against anything - and by that I mean that whether or not we obey them, we still cannot help hearing them - in their indestructible character they prove to be the very laws of speech, as I tried to show you." (Lacan, 1986, p. 204-205)

What distinguishes the Jewish religion from the Christian religion? It seems to be faith that precisely differentiates them. Faith is not a category in the Jewish religion and in the absence of faith, it in turn puts emphasis on the law: the law of symbolism.

For Lacan, religion is indestructible and it will triumph over not only psychoanalysis but also science (Lacan, 2005, p. 79). Freud, on the other hand, is convinced that science can overcome religion. He has never ceased to hope and even believed that science would replace religion: a fundamental scientific fact for him and on which he rests all his hopes. Coming from a Jewish people whose faith is not the basis of their religion, we would say that Freud has faith in science. Is there a connection between what is to be Jewish for Freud and his faith in science?

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We would like to propose to consider Freud's relationship to science in light of what binds him to Judaism and his Jewishness. Can we find a link between what was passed on to him from Judaism and his indestructible hope for science? This, by consequence, could allow us to distinguish faith in language and in the unconscious, from faith in religion.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A JEW FOR FREUD

*Neither German nor Austrian, but Jewish*

Lacan teaches us that a signifier is that which represents a subject for another signifier (Lacan, 1966, p. 819). Obviously, it is by this *Jewish* signifier that Freud often presents himself. «*Neither German nor Austrian, but Jewish*» (Freud, 1979, p. 216) is what Freud replied to Gilles de La Tourette, during a meeting in Paris, while speaking of the likelihood of a great war between France and Germany.

Once we assume that Freud presents himself as Jewish, now we need to try to identify what this Jewish signifier represents to him as substance. Was Freud religious? No. Was he a nationalist? Neither. So, how did he understand this «being Jewish» that he has always claimed? He does not believe in any religion, not even that of his people, as he often likes to remind us. It is for him an object of epistemic interest, of analysis, and of research. He is interested in it as he does for any psychic phenomenon, pathological or not.

What it means to be Jewish for Freud is clearly dissociated from religion. It is as an atheist, radically opposed to any religion, that he asks himself the question. Freud thus separates the issue from Judaism and the Judeity of the religion. Let us assume that this is precisely what makes this issue so complex. If being Jewish has nothing to do with religion, then what does it mean to be Jewish? How can you be Jewish without religion?

Clearly, just beyond Freud, this complex issue still remains to be unsolvable and is of major concern today. Let us quote Freud:

«I can say that I stand far away from the Jewish religion as from all other religions [...] Nevertheless, I have always had a strong feeling of solidarity with my fellow-people and have always encouraged it in my children as well. We have all remained in the Jewish denomination. (Freud, 1992, p. 146)

And in a letter to Jacob Meitlis of June 8, 1938:

«You know without any doubt that I recognize my Jewishness with joy and pride, even though my attitude towards all religions, including our own, is the culmination of a critical refusal.» (Freud, 1983, p. 240)

The following segment of the Jewish history allows us to introduce Freud's relationship to his Jewishness. In a Jewish family of wealthy bourgeoisie, his progressive left-wing father never misses an opportunity to highly proclaim his atheist convictions. Wishing that his son would receive the best education possible, he enrolls him at Trinity School, a school that was once religious but now became secular and open to all. Some time later, the son comes home and says carelessly, 'By the way, Dad, do you know the meaning of the word *'Trinity'*? It means the trio of the Father, the Son

and the Holy Spirit'. The father, barely restraining himself, grabs the boy by the shoulders and declares: «Son, there is only one God- and we do not believe in him! (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 115).

Freud has not ceased to express himself nor questioned his Jewishness, both publicly in his writings and also privately in his letters. The richness and abundance of his correspondence enables us to enter into his intimate and profound questioning. Based on these rich and exciting readings, we are able to draw some lessons about Freud's relationship to his Jewishness. It is also interesting and important to take into account the historical context of Freud's remarks. Indeed, his words are also a response to his time, to the discourse that runs through the society in which he lives.

The intensity of his words and the claim of his Jewishness are heightened when confronted with more overt anti-Semitism. In those contexts, asserting and claiming his Jewishness is a clear response to anti-Semitism.

For Freud, what characterizes "*the reality of Judaism*" is multi-faceted and originates in a particular narrative. The history of the Jews, the tradition and living conditions of this people have forged certain traits which, in his opinion, are part of the Jewish identity.

We have collected in his books, articles and correspondence the fundamental signifiers that he considers to constitute his Jewish being, namely: *Enjoying life to the fullest, hoping/resisting, not surrendering / being in solidarity, belonging to / being lucid, not being in denial with the reality/ enduring isolation, being free of prejudice / never giving up / And finally, Judeity: essential but inaccessible.*

From above-mentioned conditions of what Freud considers to constitute being Jewish, let us take a look at the last two again as they seem to sum up in a clear and concise matter all that Freud was able to say on this matter.

## NEVER GIVING UP

In a letter to his son Ernst, who, after financial setbacks and a climate of anti-Semitism, left Germany to settle in London with his family, Freud writes: «It is something that's authentically Jewish to never give up and to replace what has been lost.» (Freud, 2012, p. 242)

To try to grasp what Freud means by this replacement or substitution, let us go back to *Moses and monotheism*. (Freud, 2010)

### *Moses against all odds*

Why did Freud write this book? And for what reasons does Moses torment him «*like an unexorcised mind*»? (Freud, 2010, p. 182)

In the summer of 1934, Freud writes the first version of this study, which he titles: *Moses: a historical Novel*. According to the letter written to Arnold Zweig on September 30<sup>th</sup> of 1934, the «*starting point*» of *Moses* is the tragic news of anti-Semitic persecution.

«You know very well the starting point of my work; It was the same as for your *Balance Sheet*. In face of new persecutions, one wonders once again how the Jew became what he is and why he has attracted this eternal hatred. I soon found the solution. Moses created the Jew and that's how the title of my work came to be: *Moses: a historical novel*. (Freud, Zweig, 1973, p. 129)

Freud decides to keep his new work secret and decides not to publish it in order to avoid the hostility of the Church and the censorship of psychoanalysis.

But his writing *Moses* does not leave him in peace:

«*Moses* and what I wanted to do with him continually pursues me. But it's impossible, the external dangers and the inner scruples leave me no other way out. (Freud, Zweig, 1973, p. 136).

It was not until 1939 that Freud, who was residing in London as a refugee after leaving Vienna in 1938, revisits his plans for publication. At this point, he has nothing left to lose.

«Then came the unexpected German invasion of March 1938, which forced me to leave my homeland, but also freed me from worrying that by publishing this, it could provoke a ban on psychoanalysis where it was still being tolerated.» (Freud, 2010, p. 182)

He builds on his two earlier articles from 1937, published in *Imago* - «*Moses: an Egyptian*» and «*If Moses were an Egyptian...*»- and adds a third part: «*Moses, his people and the monotheism.*» This long and final part summarizes the previous parts and proposes a theory of religion, which this time based on the Jewish religion, builds on and develops from *Totem and Taboo* (1912).

It is in this third part of *Moses* that Freud articulates in a masterful way what makes the Jew and the specificity of the Jewish religion.

He ends up publishing his *Moses* just before he dies, against all odds, despite the many letters of threats, insults, and the advice of his colleagues and relatives, who suggest him not do so, (Gay, 1991, p. 727-734) and also despite of the fact that his hypotheses are in no way confirmed by historians and scientists.

Freud therefore publishes his *Moses* at a time when he has nothing more to lose, when in a sense he had already lost everything. Here we find the illustration of what he writes to his son: do not give up anything replace what has been lost. By publishing it, in fact, he does not give up anything and with a discourse replace what has been lost: namely his homeland. It's difficult not to notice that the fate of psychoanalysis is inextricably linked to that of the Jewish people. After the Anschluss on March 15 of 1938, the liquidation of psychoanalysis was swift and complete. Forced to find refuge in England, Freud would compare the loss of the Viennese cradle to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now, let us go back to our question of why *Moses*? What Freud seeks in this work is to try to grasp the genesis of the Jewish religion, its specificity, the characteristics of the Jewish people and, at the same time, the genesis of religions in general, in order to be able to answer the question that preoccupies him and which does not leave him in peace: why do Jews attract eternal hatred and how is it that they resist all persecution?

### *Moses created the Jew*

Where does this ability of the Jews to live or even to survive come from? Asks Freud. Of all the peoples of antiquity who lived around the Mediterranean Basin, the Jewish people, Freud



recalls, are almost the only ones that still exist by their own name and essence. They defied all persecutions, developed special traits and in turn attracted hatred from all other peoples. They have high self-esteem, consider themselves superior to others, from which they separate by their customs and traditions. These people have special assurance, a kind of optimism that believers might call trust in God. This assurance, Freud proposes, comes from their belief that they are particularly close to God and that they are His chosen people.

Chosen, elevated and sanctified people, separated from other people, this sentiment of the Jews has become part of their religious belief, thereby their strength. However, behind God who has chosen them is Moses! Thus, Freud concludes:

“[...] it was the man Moses, alone, who created the Jews. It is to him that this people owe their tenacity to live, but also much of the hostility that they have experienced and continue to experience» (Freud, 2010, p. 185)

Freud wonders why the Jewish people were so attached to their God and even to the point of being submissive to Him when they were being mistreated by Him: It's because in addition to the pride of being the chosen ones, the religion also brought to the Jews a representation of a more grandiose God. And thus believing in this God could enable them to have a feeling of being elevated like Him.

Freud considers that the prohibition of representing God, and thus venerating a God that cannot be seen, has had a definite influence on the Jewish people. Spirituality and abstraction have taken precedence over sensoriality. Moses has given the Jewish people the pride of being the chosen ones, and the dematerialization of God has added the pride of being superior to those left in the grip of this sensoriality.

For Freud, the tenacity and perseverance of the Jewish people are essential and highly significant traits of this people, inseparable from their history. For him, what is at the origin of this perseverance is the relationship to the text. The text keeps this people alive. This is the result of the dematerialization of the Jewish religion, i.e. the prohibition of the image and the primacy of the text, as he developed at length in *Moses* in 1938. The story of Rabbi Jochanan Ben Zakkaï is repeatedly recounted by Freud in his various correspondences and also in *Moses*.

Thus, Freud, who was exiled in London because of the persecution spree of the Nazis, writes in a letter to Jacob Meitlis, a member of the YIVO (Yiddish Scientific Institute) committee on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1938:

«We Jews have always been able to respect spiritual values. We have preserved our unity through ideas, and it is to this unity that we owe our survival until this present day. The fact that Rabbi Jochanan Ben Zakkaï, immediately after the destruction of the Temple, obtained the permission from the conqueror to establish the first academy of Jewish studies in Jabneh, for me has always been one of the most significant manifestations of our history. Once again, our people are facing dark times, which require us to join forces in order to preserve all our culture and science unharmed during the current severe storms. (Freud, 1983, p. 240)

This position of Ben Zakkaï - the acceptance of the yoke of the Romans and the opening of a school in Jabneh as the sole claim - condenses what makes the Jew for Freud. At a time when Jews are being hunted down and murdered almost all across Europe, Freud reminds us that Jewish

resistance manifests itself through the transmission of texts or science, whatever the cost.

In 1938, he instructs his daughter, Anna Freud, to read this passage on Ben Zakkai, at the congress of psychoanalysis in Paris, which he could not attend due to his health condition. But this idea was already present in 1886 when he wrote to Martha:

«And historians say that if Jerusalem had not been destroyed, we Jews would have disappeared like so many other people before and after us. It was only after the destruction of the visible temple that the invisible edifice of Judaism could be built (Freud, 1979, p. 29-31)

The invisible, which allows for the edifice and perseverance of Judaism, leaves a central place for the signifier, and those are the signifiers that have been passed down and continue to be transmitted from generation to generation.

Let us now return to what Freud wrote to his son: “It is something authentically Jewish to give up nothing and to replace what has been lost” (Freud, 2012, p. 242). The tenacity and resistance of the Jewish people, which Freud attributes to the position of Rabbi Jochanan Ben Zakkai, sheds light on this statement. After the destruction of the Temple, Ben Zakkai replaced what had been lost - namely, the homeland, the Temple - with the study of the text and transmission. In this substitution or replacement that Freud refers to, it is a question of knowing how to deal with the loss, with the reality, and of fighting to realize one's desire, without illusion or despair. Freud's life and work bear witness to this position. Freud did not give in to discouragement when he is confronted with anti-Semitism upon entering university. He makes every effort to prevent psychoanalysis from becoming a “Jewish affair”, a prey for anti-Semitism. He publishes his theses on child sexuality at the cost of terrible isolation. He also publishes his *Moses* against all odds. These various elements outline what Lacan defines as an ethical position: “I propose that the only thing one can be guilty of, at least from an analytical perspective, is to have given in to one's desire” (Lacan 1986, p. 368).

## ESSENTIAL BUT INACCESSIBLE JEWISH IDENTITY

It is undeniable that Freud's Jewishness is a matter of constant preoccupation to him. His responses are often tinged with a sense that something in this notion of a Jew remains inaccessible to analysis. Here is what he said in 1934 in his preface to the Hebrew edition of *Totem and Taboo*:

*«No reader of [the Hebrew version] of this book will find it easy to put himself in the emotional position of an author who is ignorant of the language of holy writ, who is completely estranged from the religion of his fathers - as well as from every other religion - and who cannot take a share in nationalist ideals, but who has yet never repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature as a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature. If the question were put to him: 'Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?' he would reply: 'A very great deal, and probably its very essence.' He could not now express that essence clearly in words, but some day, no doubt, it will become accessible to the scientific mind.»* (Freud, 1993, p. 67-68)

He reiterated this point in a letter to Barbara Low, Eder's sister-in-law, written in 1936 on the occasion of the death of David Eder, his friend and first follower in England: «We were both Jews and knew of each other that we had in common within us this miraculous thing which, still inaccessible to any analysis, makes the Jew.» (Freud, 1979, p. 29-31)

It is striking to know that the very person who invents psychoanalysis stumbles upon something and remains unable to define what makes the Jew. What is it that it eludes Freud and why does this question not leave him alone?

## FREUD, AN ATHEIST JEW, NOT WITHOUT THE BIBLE

*The Moses of Freud* (Yerushalmi, 1991) by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi makes a position and allows us to advance in our reflection on Freud's relationship to Judaism and science. In this book, there is not only a real questioning about what Freud's Jewishness is but also about Judaism. He explored every single piece of writing by Freud and even uncovered his unpublished works.

Yerushalmi questions Freud's thesis in *Moses*. Freud's thesis posits that for a tradition to endure, it must have suffered the fate of repression; it cannot be founded in communication. But what Freud adds to this that's surprising is his idea of a concordance between the individual and the mass: in the mass, as in the individuals, the memories of the past remains imprinted in the «unconscious memory traces», memory traces that concern the life experience of previous generations. Why does Freud persist in supporting a thesis that does not stand up, asks Yerushalmi, especially in the face of the fact that the heredity of acquired characters was already challenged by scientists?

For him, this obstinacy reflects what he calls Freud's «Lamarckism.» The link between Lamarckism and Judeity is expressed in the fact that, for many Jews, whether assimilated or faithful, the Jewish past would always exert a force of attraction in the form of belonging or a weight to bear. Yerushalmi then wonders what Jewish Lamarckism is if not:

«This deep conviction that, for better or worse, a Jew cannot really cease to be a Jew, not only because he is subjected to anti-Semitism [...] and even less so because of the chain of tradition, but because his fate as a Jew was sealed a long time ago by his fathers and he still feels its obscure vibration even in his blood today» (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 76)

Yerushalmi quotes a passage from a letter from Freud to Arnold Zweig, dated May 8, 1932, in which this view can be illustrated:

«We come from there [...] our ancestors lived there for half a millennium, perhaps a whole millennium [...] and it is impossible to say what we took as a legacy from our stay in this country in the blood and in the nerves [...]. (Freud, Zweig, 1973, p. 75)

We also find in *Moses* the idea of the character of the Jews forged by the Jewish religion for centuries: «We have it on good authority that even back in Hellenistic times, they behaved as they do today - in other words, the Jewish character was already fully formed at that time and the Jew was already himself then.» (Freud, 2010, p. 184)

Whether the transmission of acquired characters is denied by biologists or that this thesis brings



him dangerously closer to Jung's collective unconscious wouldn't be able to stop Freud. This stubbornness is very instructive for Yerushalmi. On one hand, it allows Freud to bridge the gap between individual psychology and collective psychology, but most importantly, it allows us to assert that no matter what, one cannot cease to be a Jew: it is in one's destiny sealed for centuries. In other words, Yerushalmi notes that according to Freud, a Jew does not stop being a Jew even if he is an atheist.

### *The Bible, the father's mandate*

What particularly interests us in Yerushalmi's work is that he will demonstrate that Freud had received a much greater religious education than he claimed. And this Jewish transmission he received is done through studying the Bible: In other words, by the text and its interpretation. Yerushalmi demonstrates that Freud read the Bible, can read Hebrew and is familiar with the Jewish tradition.

Freud presented an image of his Jewishness in childhood based on three points:

- he has received solely very rudimentary religious education;
- religious practice at home, in pure form, was kept to a minimum while growing up;
- he speaks neither Hebrew nor Yiddish. He's never learned either of them. (Yerushalmi, 1991, 127)

Now, drawing from Freud's anecdotes and allusions he makes in his private correspondence, Yerushalmi will present a completely different Freud. One example is among many discovered by Yerushalmi. It testifies to Freud's perfect knowledge of the Bible. In a letter dated July 23rd, 1880, the day before an examination, Freud tells his friend Carl Koller that he had not yet started reviewing the materials:

«I have decided to forget about pharmacology... and instead to review this interesting topic at my leisure after the holidays. But Wednesday afternoon merely twenty four hours after I made that decision, I rejoiced; the satanic laughter of hell erupted in my ears, the clamor was great in Israel, and my best friends sang the funeral song, «*Don't say it in Askelon. Don't shout it out in the streets of Gath,*» which was sung at the death of Saul and Jonathan. Hence, I have decided to sink yet another twelve hours into the throes of pharmacology.» (Freud, 1966, p. 260)

Freud not only quotes the verse from memory but also understands its context. And as Yerushalmi points out, Freud cites it again seventeen years later in a letter to Fliess written on September 21st, 1897 when he tells him about his doubts concerning his theory of seduction:

«It's also curious that I don't feel sheepish, which would seem natural. *Of course, I shall not tell it in Dan, nor speak of it in Askelon, in the land of the Philistines* - but your eyes and my own, I have more sense of victory than of defeat. (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 130-131)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The text by Y.H. Yerushalmi is written in Italics

What Yerushalmi finds remarkable is that Freud not only uses this biblical expression as a proverb that resonates with the idea of not disclosing a secret, but that he also does so in perfect connection to the historical context of that expression. In other words, the mourning of Saul and Jonathan is a metaphor for the mourning of his theory of seduction and also of the mourning of his father.

But the central element that will allow Yerushalmi to deduce that Freud did indeed receive Jewish education is the dedication that Jakob Freud affixed to the Bible he offered Sigmund Freud, his son. The whole argument of Yerushalmi's is based on this dedication. Not only does it allow him to say that there was a transmission from Jakob to Sigmund, but also to interpret the subjective effect this dedication had on Freud toward the end of his life. Yerushalmi recounts this crucial period between Freud and his father, whose scope he considers was never fully properly evaluated. It is 1891 and Jakob Freud offers Freud, or rather gives back, the Bible of his youth for his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday. Jakob's dedication is not written in German but rather in Hebrew, a fact, for Yerushalmi, which proves that Freud could read Hebrew.

Let us take a moment now to savor this dedication written in a beautiful language. Yerushalmi, a connoisseur of the Bible and of the Talmud, comments almost exhaustively on the rules of interpretation of the Midrash in this text. Let us now quote this precious document:

«A son who is dear to me, Shlomo. In the seventh year of your life, the Spirit of the Lord began inspire you. He spoke within you: 'Go, read the Book, I have written' and there will burst forth for you the fountains of discernment, knowledge and understanding. The Book of Books: Behold it! Therein sages delved and lawgivers learned knowledge and justice. A vision of the Almighty you perceived; you hearkened and ventured; you achieved and soared on the wings of the spirit. Since then the Book has remained in reserve, like fragments of tablets in any ark with me. Toward the day there would be completed your thirty-five years. I put upon it a new leather covering. Then I named it "Spring up, O well - sing unto it" and I am presenting it before you as an offering of a memorial, a remembrance of love who loves you with an everlasting love.

Jacob son of R. Shlomo Freud.

In the capital city of Vienna, 29 Nisan [5] 651, May 6<sup>th</sup> [1]891 (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 139-140)

The most important point, finally, and the most precious is not only what this dedication says, but the way in which the message is said. It is written in *Melitzah*, i.e. made up of expressions from the Bible, rabbinical literature, or liturgy. This literary technique was widely used by poets and prose writers in the Hebrew language from the Middle Ages to the Haskalah. Yerushalmi reminds us that the peculiarity of the <sup>2</sup>*Melitzah*, is that each word refers to the context from which it is extracted, hence the pertinence for him is to visit the sources from which Jakob Freud alludes, either directly or indirectly.

Let us follow Yerushalmi's demonstration. «Son who is dear to me», as well as the following phrase «Who loves you with an everlasting love» are expressions from the book of Jeremiah (Bible, Chapter 4, Verse 19). Now, in Jeremiah, the beloved son is Ephraim. Thus, the context of this *Melitzah* is Ephraim - an emblematic figure of the lost tribes of Israel. The prophet hints at the possibility of the tribes' return and reconciliation with God the Father. How can we not think that Jakob Freud had this context in his mind? The underlying meaning of this dedication, in this case, would be a call for return and reconciliation - a call from Jakob Freud to his son to resume

<sup>2</sup> The *Haskalah* is a school of thought that extended from the 18<sup>th</sup> TO THE 19<sup>th</sup> century. Influenced by the Enlightenment, it advocated acquiring general culture, bringing Jews and host peoples closer together, and learning the language of the host country and also Hebrew.

his Bible and return to his reading. It is this common thread that guides Yerushalmi's reading. Let us continue:

«In the seventh year of your life, the Spirit of the Lord began to inspire you and spoke within you: "Go, read the Book [...] You had a vision of the Almighty, you perceived; you hearkened and ventured; you achieved and soared on the wings of the Spirit (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 139-140)

These words allude to the moment when Freud began to study the Bible. «Since then, the Book has remained in reserve, like fragments of tablets in an ark with me»: When Freud left his father's house, he left his Bible in bad shape, like the broken tables. When his son turns thirty five, Jakob decides to give it back to him and cover it with «a new leather covering» (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 140)

In 1933, Hitler seizes power and the Nazis began to hunt down and persecute Jews and psychoanalysis. At the end of 1934, Freud completes the first draft of *Moses*. For Yerushalmi, it is through this book that Freud fulfills the father's mandate that he had received at the age of thirty-five and he decides to write his first and only Jewish book in order to answer the question of what makes him Jewish. In *Moses*, Freud returns to the Bible study and speaks most openly about the Jewish question, on what makes Jews what they are. Yerushalmi finds confirmation of his hypothesis in an article written by Freud titled «Auto-presentation»:

«I was [...] driven by a kind of desire to know, which, however, was related more to the human condition than to natural objects - a desire which had not recognized the value of observation as the main means of self-satisfaction. *The fact that I immersed myself very early on, having barely finished learning to read, in the study of the Biblical history, has determined the orientation of my interests in a lasting way, as I realized later on*» (Freud, 1992, p. 56)

The first part of this article was written in 1924, the year of the first edition of this text; the second, in italics, was added on in 1935. It is only then, in writing *Moses*, that Freud publicly acknowledges the influence of the Bible study on him. It is this precise point that makes Yerushalmi argue that *Moses* represents a belated fulfillment of the father's mandate. With this book, he states, Freud obeys his father, plunges back into the study of the Bible, but that his own interpretation allows him to maintain his independence. There is no material truth in the Bible, but Freud is delighted to discover a historical truth in it. (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 151)

Yerushalmi concludes his book with a «Monologue with Freud.» It is in a Talmudic way that he addresses Freud with this expression *ledidah*, which means «in your opinion, according to you,» and reminds him of what Abraham had written to him in a letter on May 11, 1908:

«The Talmudic way of thinking cannot just suddenly disappear from us [...] in the technique of the apposition and in all its composition, your book on wit was quite Talmudic. (Freud, Abraham, 2006, p. 73)

In this monologue, Yerushalmi revisits his thesis of a tradition that gets transmitted through the unconscious of a group. He demonstrates to Freud that this thesis is inadmissible on one hand because it contradicts the scientific evidence of modern genetics, but especially given

the fundamental differences between individual memory and collective memory. History is transmitted because some do not forget, even if they are only few, and continue to transmit even to a small number of people. Freud himself points this out by affirming that the Levites remained faithful to their master, Moses, and that they preserved his memory and teachings. Thus, comes the question from Yerushalmi to Freud: Why does he abandon the transmission of memory traces of the Levites in favor of an «archaic heritage»? (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 168)

For Yerushalmi, this is what allows Freud to claim to be a «Jew» without Judaism. Since if it is true that a national character can be transmitted independently of a communication or the influence of education, then it means that «Jewishness» can be transmitted independently of Judaism and that the former is interminable even if the latter is over. He distills this idea in the following phrase: an interminable Judeity even if Judaism is over. (Yerushalmi, 1991, 168)

## Conclusion

Lacan tells us that the Jew, since the return of Babylon, is the one who can read, i.e. «that from the letter he distances himself from his word, finding there the interval, just playing an interpretation» (Lacan, 2001, p. 428). It is a separation between the written and the spoken, which results in the possibility of an interpretation. In the absence of their territory, text along with language and scriptures are the very perpetuity of the Jewish people. This is illustrated by Ben Zakkai's act, which is so essential to Freud.

However, we have found that Freud, paradoxically, also approaches this transmission through archaic heritage, which led Yerushalmi to an interpretation of what Freud says of Judaism: Judeity has been acquired for centuries and therefore, no longer depends on Judaism.

A different reading of this so-called «archaic heritage» can be understood using Lacanian concepts. What Freud calls an archaic heritage is a discourse. It is language that allows the transmission of speech. Freud's hypothetical biological solution is no longer a problem from the concept of discourse, since the collective unconscious is language, as the statements are deposited in language. Consequently, what Judaism transmits is a discourse that passes through grammar, vocabulary, etymological evolution, with words that disappear and others that are invented. We are beings of discourse and a discourse builds us. Freud's reality was that he was caught between his relationship to science, which was fundamental to him on one hand and, on the other his relationship to Jewish discourse. Freud, as a psychoanalyst, works with the subject of language, and it is for this reason that he could not ignore the question of his Jewishness - that he could not sweep away the discourse transmitted by Judaism. Here we have an answer to this question of Jewish identity, which did not leave Freud in peace until he could in turn transmit something on to posterity.

What is striking about this encounter between Jewish discourse and science is that faith is excluded in both cases. It is not a question of faith in Judaism but of text, transmission, law, a written law, a fact which has all its importance since it will give rise to a very important interpretation of the texts that still lasts until today. In Judaism it is a matter of interpretation, decryption, and of combinatorial. As Lacan points out (Lacan 1986, p. 204-205), one of the peculiarities of the Jewish people is to engage in interpretive games and debates, both of which provide satisfaction.

However, it is fundamental to note the distinction between «reading» and «scientific deciphering». Interpretation, in the Jewish tradition, lies in the gap between the written and the spoken. That is to say that the dimension of the subject, of subjectivity, is present in the interpretation, unlike mathematical deciphering, for instance. Reading in the sense of Lacan includes the «spoken» and therefore the subject. The gap between the speech and the writing allows for interpretation, and it will never be based on certainty. Doubt can only persist in the gap and interpretation will never solve the subject's lack of being.

Let's say this is what Freud comes up against. On one hand, what has been transmitted to him by Judaism places him on the side of the book and not on the side of faith or image. This tradition, this relationship to the text allows him to invent psychoanalysis and bring him closer to science. But on the other hand, he does not stop hoping that science can solve what is inaccessible to the *speaking-being*, which remains indecipherable. Therefore, he never ceases to hope that science could replace religion. Thus, he hopes that Judaism will one day be accessible to scientific understanding. Perhaps that's what brings Freud closer to science. He replaces faith with science. He relies on science to make sense of things in life.

This encounter between Jewish discourse and science could be illustrated by Freud's obstinacy in using science to confirm his assumptions about Moses. He publishes his *Moses* against all odds, and although his hypotheses were in no way validated by historians or scientists. For Freud:

«An objection is not a rebuttal however [...] I'm not an ethnologist, rather a psychoanalyst. I had the right to draw what I could use from ethnological literature for the analytical work » (Freud, 2010, p. 210)

Or, when he was told that Sellin<sup>3</sup> himself doubted his hypothesis regarding the murder of Moses, he replies: «Nevertheless, his hypothesis was correct.» (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 158)

What interests Freud is not material truth, rather truth as it is transmitted through language. He believes in what is transmitted and gives scientific value to it.

This would seem to us to be one of the possible differences between faith in religion and faith in signifiers, especially since believing in the Freudian unconscious does not in any way nullify the responsibility of the subject. On the contrary, the unconscious allows for the appearance of the subject's responsibility.

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3 Freud relies on Sellin to affirm that Moses was assassinated by his people.

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